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it originality. The result is, no excessive personal tricks of brush-work are to be found, to attract the attention of the beholder away from the subject and its profound expression or to get in between him and the subject. Hence all the elemental art-powers: composition, expression, drawing and color can work upon our soul unimpeded by cheap monkey-tricks of forced technical mannerisms in paintings. The total result is a general *harmony* at once highly stirring to the emotions yet filling us with a feeling of repose and a gentle craving for peace as, with regret, we move away from the picture.

Of course, just as one swallow does not make a Summer, so one picture of "Peace" will not prevent a war. But that the psychological influence of this work does strongly and eternally operate upon men toward modifying the savagery still latent in mankind and helps to create within them a longing for a real, unstagnant paradise on earth is certain; thus it makes for a steady working force toward higher social ends. And there can be no doubt that within a decade the cultured public will agree that not only is this one of the greatest works produced in the last five hundred years, but that it is the highest flight of Puvis de Chavannes.

A CLEVER WORK OF ART "THE DANCER"

By DEGAS

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THE public must ever remember that the slogan "Eternal Vigilance is the price of Liberty" applies as much to the world of art as to politics. It must not allow itself to be deceived by the honest artists who have not perspicacity enough to see that cleverness is not art but only part of art; nor should it allow itself to be bamboozled by the dishonest artists who know full well that there is something much higher in art than mere cleverness, but who, discovering too late in life and after much strife their inability or disinclination to work hard enough to produce great art, and not wishing to quit the world of art, turn charlatans and with the most cunning casuistry try to hood-wink the public into believing that cleverness is not only a part of art but all there is in art that is worth striving for. Unfortunately they have often had great success in many quarters, especially in this epoch, aided by either ignorant or interested art dealers.

We confess it is extremely difficult for the public to find out which artists are dishonest charlatans and which are honest self-deceivers. But that the European world of art is full of charlatans, and that they have some imitators here, is as certain as that life is full of charlatanism. Hence the public should ever be on its guard against all European art, art-criticism and art-pushing, no matter from what quarter it may come, and never fail to apply the acid test of morality and common-sense, in the doing of which it should trust to its instincts and intuitions more than any finely spun, cleverly cryptic verbal pyrotechnics.

Cleverness may be defined as great skill accompanied by a dexterous quickness and sureness of touch and by a sprightly spirit which the French call "Chic," a spirit made up mostly of gaiety, a little flippancy and just a pinch of cynicism.

Cleverness is never entirely serious, even at best.

Cleverness will always defy some fundamentally necessary convention.

Cleverness will always leave something unfinished, stop short of pushing finish to a finish.

Cleverness is never profound, is always superficial and prefers synthesis to analysis.

Cleverness will always snap its fingers at the white beard of Moses.

Therefore Amiel said "Cleverness is useful in everything, sufficient for nothing."

And yet, when the secret proportions of the ingredients of truly fine cleverness, according to the Greek motto "Nothing too much" are mixed in a work—which is indeed rarely the case—it never fails, when morally clean, to be adorable.

The pastel "The Dancer" by Degas is a perfect gem of cleverness, but it is not a great work of art. As pure cleverness of craftsmanship it is unsurpassed in modernistic art, made before modernism descended into the depths of stupid degeneracy, and an unfailing source of intellectual interest, a rare specimen of "intellectual art." It stirs no lofty emotions, in fact none except the negative emotion of surprise that is aroused by its skill. It does not amuse us, nor delight us, nor enrapture us, that is, we of the public who do not belong to that gild of artists which is always in quest of mere cleverness. It was not intended to rouse our emotions. It was made with the sole purpose of capturing our intellect, and it does that easily. It is a perfect specimen of "Art for art's sake"—of the so-called "Pursuit of pure beauty without any other preoccupation" as Gautier would say; also it is an example of art made to appeal to artists only.

In subject "The Dancer" is by itself trivial, but "chic" in conception. Nor is the color of the pastel especially delightful in composition; the background too is blotchy and disagreeable. But where it really triumphs is in the astonishing sureness of drawing. This is manifested by the truth, the instantaneity of the movement of the entire figure of the dancer as she flies to the front of the stage to obtain her mead of applause. This truth of movement is so extraordinary that it is apt to escape the attention of the public, because the public does not know how difficult it is to draw with such sureness, showing such truth of construction and that of the movement of a figure "taken on the fly." Besides this, it is accompanied by so much lightness of touch and such "snappy technique" that it looks as if a wizard had just playfully thrown it off in a few moments. It is this extraordinary sureness of craftsmanship, done apparently without effort, which makes certain artists

rave over the works of Degas, in spite of the fact that he has spent his life in using his great technical talents to produce merely intellectually amusing but uninspiring trifles.

Although certain details have not been pushed to as great a finish as they might have been; although the work is therefore "impressionistic," the work is certainly deserving of the highest praise for the mere skill displayed. Moreover the lines of the figure are extremely graceful and therefore do afford us some charming emotions. This pastel is perhaps the cleverest thing Degas has done during the last twenty-five year. It is a modernistic work, it is true, but not yet excessively so. It was later on that Degas, after having done a few more such really fine things, was swept off his feet by the current and then joined the ranks of the excessivists.

What could he not have accomplished if his soul had been attuned to the aim of captivating the heart and soul of mankind instead of its brain, of merely arousing the envy of such artists as are also only in quest of nothing but the clever and

the "chic," and not always as free as they should be from that chief of all sins in art, vulgarity? However, artists cannot all be Michelangelos; things that appeal to our intellectual admiration only are not to be despised but should receive all the praise they are entitled to. But as the French say "Let us put things in their places" and let us always refrain from calling a work *great* when it is only *clever*.

If cleverness of craftsmanship, sureness of drawing and dashing "artistry" were the *sine qua non* of great art, Degas would easily take front rank. Unfortunately for him, art for artists does not last, because in the long run mankind demands far more. And therefore a Puvis de Chavannes, when at his best as in his "Peace" is secure in his place at the head of the table at the banquet of the world, even among modernistic artists—when they are really serious and honest and look at art from the broad and lofty standpoint of the public good—the most valid standpoint, in the last analysis, from which to look on art.

A DEGENERATE WORK OF ART A CUBISTIC CREATION

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IN the world of art, as in the world at large, we have moral degeneracy and intellectual degeneracy. The latter nearly always is the result of the former.

The intellectual degeneracy of the modernistic movement of to-day can be easily traced back to the moral degeneracy of Paris during the period of the Second Empire, created by that mephistophic traitor and despot Napoleon III, when Paris had fallen so low that, as an authoritative writer says: "There was then no longer any tribune, no press, no public opinion. The unique care was the material interests and the satisfaction of coarse pleasures towards which the government itself pushed the people." Alcoholism, drug-addiction and sex-perversion became so common that Paris was redolent with vices and excessivism of all kinds, until finally moral depression, pessimism and a hunger for a change suggested a revolution, not only in government but in life and everything. Art did not escape. Therefore excessivism ending in modernism was the natural result.

Like a disease the Empire had run its course. It was finally destroyed because contrary to the nature of the French people. Likewise modernism, like a plague, will have to run its course. It will also be soon destroyed because contrary to the nature of mankind and nature's laws of the beautiful, and because it is a manifestation of intellectual degeneracy rooted, we repeat, in the moral degeneracy of the past.

The cubistic picture we show on page 424 is a degenerate work of art.

We do not remember how the photograph from which the plate of this creation was made came into our hands, do not know the title nor the author and do not care to know. It violates every law of art, is a negation of all beauty and a libel on the

human form which it presumes to represent and in a vague way recalls.

Whenever we wish to expose the fallacy of any social or æsthetic gospel we need only to go to nature to obtain the most useful weapons. Nature is our mother and always gives us the soundest hints and suggestions, though the profound secrets of nature will always elude man. But she reveals to us all that is best for us to know, and we can learn those things if we will only humbly look about for her suggestions and then modestly act upon them.

All the indications offered us by nature prove that—*Nature abhors the straight line, even more the rectangle and cube, avoids them when possible, and always seeks the curve.* There are almost no rectangles in nature and few, if any, cubes even among the lowest crystals.

It is the curve which dominates nature. Our eyes, mind and soul are adjusted to the curve. Therefore there is nothing so disagreeable to us, in form, as a severely plain and empty picture frame of say about a yard square. Why? Because the eyes, being compelled to follow the lines of a picture frame when they arrive at a *corner*, are suddenly switched in a different direction, and this sudden switching jostles, shocks and twitches the muscles which move the eyes. Whereas the eyes follow easily all curves, and also positively enjoy this following of the curves. When a frame is filled with a picture full of curves we forget the frame, because the mind is focused upon the picture; but an empty frame on a wall is a disagreeable object simply because its angularity at each corner shocks the eyes.

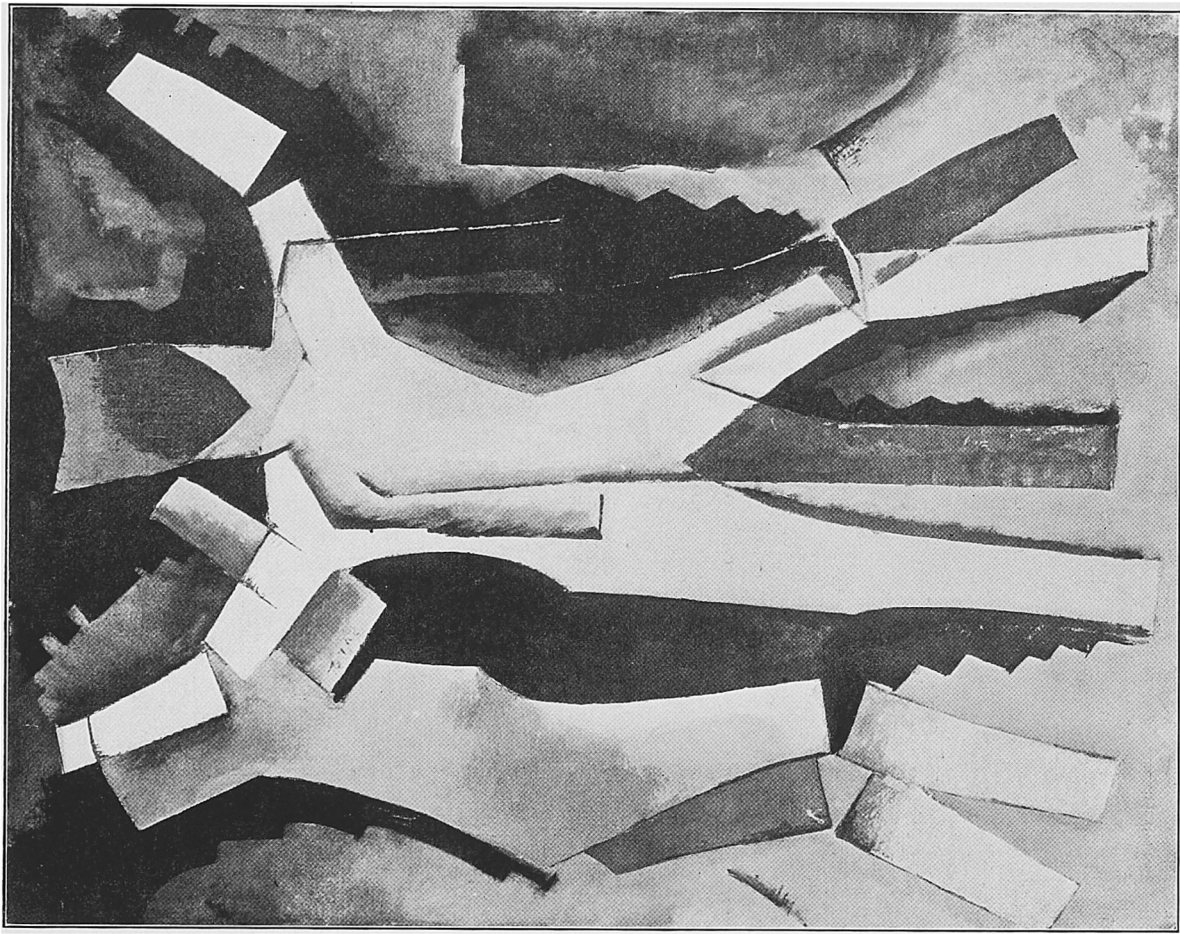
Therefore a cubistic picture full of straight lines and right-angles, such as we find in the one we illustrate on page 424, is contrary to the laws of nature, which laws insist upon the establishment of



"THE DANCER"

BY DEGAS

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A DEGENERATE WORK OF ART

BY A CUBIST

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